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Spring, 2002

Dear Friends:

The 2002 short legislative session has ended. While we passed several important pieces of legislation, I am disappointed we did not reach agreement on a major tax restructuring plan or address the state budget deficit.

I voted for a plan in the House that would have offset expected property tax increases, created a better climate for economic growth and addressed the current state budget deficit intensified by the national recession. I believe this proposal, while not perfect, answered some of the questions about fairness and equity that have long plagued our tax systems.

I thought we should confront these issues now rather than later if we are to avoid cutting important state services, including funding for public education. Unfortunately, Republicans in the Indiana House and Senate did not share this opinion, and we were unable to establish a compromise in the closing days of the session. It concerns me that the Republicans are unwilling to do anything to address the short-term financial stability of our state. I remain hopeful that we can reach some consensus on these issues in the coming months before deeper, more painful cuts become necessary.

Despite my concerns about the budget deficit and taxes, I am pleased we did enact several proposals to help a variety of Hoosiers. We passed landmark public safety and anti-terrorism legislation, enacted important provisions that protect children and approved several health care initiatives. I have detailed a number of those new laws inside this newsletter.

Please contact me if you have questions or concerns about state government. You can e-mail me at H96@in.gov or call 232-9600.

Sincerely,

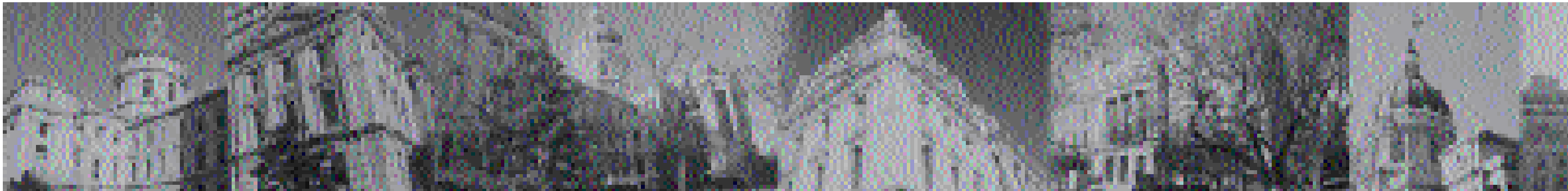


Inside

•Anti-terrorism laws

•Landlord-Tenant Law

•Fighting Crime



No agreement on taxes, budget

We reached the March 14 deadline for adjournment with no agreement on restructuring Indiana's tax code and resolving the deficit in the biennial state budget.

House Bill 1004, which I supported and helped pass out of the House, addressed both of those issues. The leaders in the Indiana Senate, however, felt there was no need to address the budget situation at this time.

I voted for a plan that would have reduced the effects of a court-ordered property tax reassessment, encouraged job creation through a series of business initiatives and expanded eligibility for the earned income tax credit. We could have achieved all of this with only a small increase in the state sales tax and the corporate net income tax.

The legislation also addressed our current budget crisis, providing new revenue that would prevent cuts in important state services. We are not alone in our current budget situation as virtually every state in the nation has a budget deficit due to the national recession and lingering effects of the September 11 attacks. I believe we must act now rather than later to avoid future cuts.

Porter law aids veterans, schools



REP. PORTER ADDRESSES THE HOUSE.

I am pleased that a bill I authored will grant high school diplomas to veterans of World War I and II. House Bill 1108 provides that honorably discharged World War veterans who attended high school in good standing but did not graduate because of joining the military may now receive their diploma.

Veterans, their spouses or family members may apply for the diploma, free of charge, from the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

House Bill 1108 also includes a provision giving a charter school sponsored by the mayor of Indianapolis the ability to obtain financing through a local public improvement bond bank.

Legislature stands together on public safety legislation

After the terrorist attacks of September 11, officials across the country took a serious look at the ability of local emergency systems to respond to a similar threat. House Bill 1001 establishes a Counter-Terrorism and Safety Council (C-TASC) that will serve as the coordinating state agency for emergency management response to terrorist acts. Chaired by the lieutenant governor, the council will develop anti-terrorism strategy, including placing an affiliate of the council in each county, coordinating efforts with the U.S. Office of Homeland Security, and implementing counter-terrorism training in the state law enforcement academy.

Part of a \$1.25 BMV service charge will be used to develop an integrated wireless public safety system to help connect agencies across the state in case of an emergency. A portion of

the service charge will also be used to alleviate the state police crime laboratory backlog.

The law includes penalties for several terrorist and public safety issues, including:

- money laundering to support terrorist activities
- restrictions on the issuance of commercial driver's licenses and hazardous materials endorsements
- penalties concerning regulated explosives or the possession of a weapon of mass destruction
- disorderly conduct on airport premises
- the expulsion of a student who brings a destructive device on school property.

While no one foresaw the devastation of the September attacks, we are taking every step possible to maintain Indiana's safety to the fullest extent.

Election reforms become law

House Bill 1101, which I authored, continues recent trends in election reforms by allowing people to cast a provisional ballot if they believe they are registered to vote in their precinct, but their names are not listed on the voter rolls. Election officials would verify that they are eligible to vote after all ballots are cast. The bill also ensures that voters have a chance to correct their ballots should they make a mistake.

Voting systems will be made more accessible to people with disabilities, it will become easier for overseas and military voters to vote by absentee ballot and there will be increased efforts to educate voters through the posting of voter rights.

Porter's firefighter merit system bill becomes law

I was pleased to author a bill that allows a township to establish a merit system for its fire department by resolution.

House Bill 1263 will permit the township or other unit to later amend or delete provisions of the merit system.

I was very interested in seeing this bill through both chambers. This law will promote diversity and opportunities that are reflected in a city and township population.

New crime legislation addresses variety of concerns

Each year the Legislature passes a number of bills that create new offenses or toughen penalties against existing crimes. During the 2002 session, lawmakers passed a measure designed to provide some relief for family and friends of people who have been murdered.



REP. PORTER DISCUSSES LEGISLATION WITH REP. BILL CRAWFORD.

House Bill 1012 requires the judge in certain murder cases to allow relatives to make victim impact statements in open court after the sentence is passed on an offender. Giving family and friends a chance to convey their feelings about a horrible crime to the person who committed it can have positive psychological effects for the mourners. In addition, impact statements help reinforce the severity of the crime to the offender and give that person a chance to show remorse for their actions.

Another new law will penalize fuel retailers who artificially inflate gas prices in times of crisis. House Bill 1015 will allow the Indiana attorney general to investigate complaints on price gouging and seek relief that would include fines and restitution to victims.

House Bill 1005 is designed to prevent people from throwing such burning material as lit cigarettes from moving vehicles. Anyone found guilty of the crime could receive a fine of up to \$1,000.

Additionally, new laws increase the penalties for such crimes as battery by body waste and leaving the scene of a boating accident.

Landlord-tenant bill passes

Lawmakers were successful in updating and modernizing landlord-tenant laws during this Session.

House Bill 1013, the latest in a series of efforts, clearly defines standards of conduct and provides remedies in case of a dispute for both landlords and tenants. These standards include the tenant's obligation to keep the property clean and to use electrical systems in a reasonable manner, while the landlord is required to comply with health and housing codes and keep systems in safe working condition.

With the passage of this law Indiana joins 40 other states that practice an implied warranty of habitability. The warranty concept—a promise that the product will work properly—is the same that one assumes with any purchase.

Telephone Privacy List still available

If you haven't yet registered for the Telephone Privacy List, you still have time. Although the list is already in effect, it is updated every three months. If you register now, your name will be included when the updated list takes effect July 1, 2002.

The Telephone Privacy List is free to Indiana residents. By adding your name, most telemarketers will be prevented by law from calling you. You only need to register once to be included.

How to register

You may register by calling the toll-free number, 1-888-834-9969. You may also register online at the Attorney General's Website. Go to www.in.gov/attorneygeneral and scroll down the page until you come to the ringing phone icon. This will take you to the Telephone Privacy List page. Click on the link that says "Register Here," and fill out the registration form.

Certain exceptions

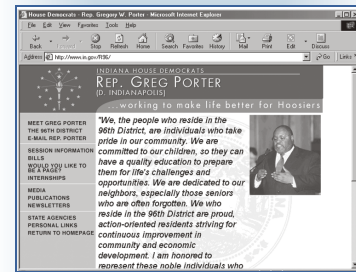
Registering with the Telephone Privacy List will not eliminate all telemarketing calls. Four types of solicitors are exempt from the law: Charitable organizations using volunteers or employees to make calls; newspapers using employees to make calls; insurance agents; and realtors.

Violations

If you receive a telemarketing call from someone other than the exceptions listed above after the list becomes effective, you may down-

load a complaint form from the Attorney General's Website or call 1-812-355-5915. If a company is in violation, the Attorney General's Office may issue a court order to prevent further calls and may seek a fine of up to \$25,000.

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